INTRODUCTION

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The Discursive Space of the Exhibition

In the early 1980s, the debate on the discursive spaces of photography and, particularly, on the conflictive inclusion of photographs into the art museum was a crucial issue for the new art criticism and historiography, labelled as postmodernist. For that Frankfurt School influenced criticism (attempting to further and to radicalise the project of a social and cultural historiography of art and photography, of art *after* photography) it was essential the production of a new historiography not based on authors, pictures or form, but rather on the relevant debates, the means of circulation and the public visibility of images; in other words, the genealogy of a specific cultural public sphere determined by photography: a photographic public sphere. During the Cold War, this cultural historiography had been set aside within an artistic discourse dominated by formalism and humanism; it would not surface until the 1970s, in the context of the emergence of the post-68 new social movements.

  Indeed, it was precisely this problematic inclusion of photography into modern art institutions – due, largely, to photography's 'documentary', mechanical and archival nature, which meant that it had been put to the service of sciences and arts – that made photography crucial to the new criticism. This was so to such an extent that, as Craig Owens pointed out, the new criticism itself was identified with 'the photographic'.[1] The historicisation of the visibility of photography in the modernist exhibitionary complex became, at that moment, an emerging field, indeed a spearhead, for discourses that attempted to go beyond the formalist paradigm of modernism. Because photography is archival, industrial and

1. Craig Owens: 'the discourse in the art world was identified with *the photographic*…. I mean the notion of the photographic as opposed to photography *per se*, theorisation of the photographic in terms of its multiple copies: no reflection of originality on the original, timed with the "death of the author", the mechanisation of image production', in Anders Stephanson, 'Interview with Craig Owens', in Craig Owens, *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power and Culture* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1992), p 300.

related to the mass media, it could not be assimilated to modernist notions of autonomous visuality.

In this context of the early 1980s, the terms of the debate on photography in the exhibition space were laid out in three seminal essays: Rosalind Krauss's *Photography's Discursive Spaces*,[2] Christopher Phillips's *The Judgment Seat of Photography*[3] (both published in 1982), and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's *From* Faktura *to Factography* (published in 1984).[4] Though very different from one another, these texts, along with a few others by Douglas Crimp and Allan Sekula,[5] are an inevitable point of departure for any study of the public visibility of photography in the institutional exhibition space.

The study of photographic exhibitions was relevant to the critique of modernism insofar as it showed the exhibition space to be a specific realm for the production of artistic autonomy. By no means free of ideology, the exhibition space was a key means to constructing the bourgeois public sphere – based on myths such as authorship and originality. The work of these critics was a reaction to the quick institutionalisation and aestheti-sation of photography, and its widespread appearance on the art market taking place precisely at that moment. At the end of her aforementioned essay, Rosalind Krauss stated that: 'everywhere at present there is an attempt to dismantle the photographic archive – the set of practices, institutions, and relationships to which nineteenth-century photography originally belonged – and to reassemble it within the categories previous-ly constituted by art and its history.'[6]

In a context of regressive discursive practices that often erased the history of the debates on the social function of art (specifically, the inscription of photography into modern art debates), the genealogical or archaeological study of the exhibition of photography in modernism was one of the primary fronts for the cultural struggles of the 1980s. It was also a crucial form of resistance to the emerging effects of neo-liberalism in the artistic

2. Originally published in *Art Journal*, no. XLII (Winter 1982).

3. Originally published in *October*, no. 22 (Autumn 1982).

4. Originally published in *October*, no. 30 (Autumn 1984) [see pp 29–61 of this volume].

5. Particularly texts by Douglas Crimp, 'The Museum's Old, the Library's New Subject', original-ly published in *Parachute*, no. 22 (Spring 1981), and by Allan Sekula, 'Photography Between Labour and Capital', in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie, eds., *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures 1948–1968* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), and 'Traffic in Photographs', *Art Journal*, vol. 41, no. I (Spring 1981). Also rele-vant are several texts by Abigail Solomon-Godeau, including 'The Armed Vision Disarmed: Radical Formalism from Weapon to Style', *Afterimage*, vol. 10, no. 6 (January 1983).

6. Rosalind Krauss, 'Photography's Discursive Spaces', originally published in *Art Journal*, vol. XLII (Winter 1982); reprinted in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p 150.

sphere, whose symptoms included the return to painting, the revitalisation of the market as a cornerstone of artistic debates and the depoliticisation of the art scene.

While Krauss and Phillips assessed the modernist museum's assimilation of photography in their texts, Buchloh reconstructed the course of El Lissitzky's exhibition paradigms from the late 1920s during the Soviet debates on superseding bourgeois artistic autonomy and the experiences of productivism, that is of an art subsumed in industrial production, the mass media and State propaganda. He critically formulated how the artistic paradigms that arose from the Soviet Revolution – from the particular interconnection between the artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde that occurred in that context – were the true engines of twentieth-century modern art. This was the case, he maintained, despite the fact that the historical account of the Soviet experiences of the 1920s had been largely obscured and repressed for a number of reasons, including the recomposition of cultural geopolitics during the Cold War.

Even today, that essay by Buchloh, the critic who most incisively condemned the regressive nature of mainstream art from the early 1980s,[7] is a milestone in studies on the relationship between the photographic document, the avant-garde and propaganda; it made way for a new approach to the study of the Soviet avant-garde. The same year Buchloh's published *From* Faktura *to Factography*, he also wrote an essay on the contemporary work of Allan Sekula and Fred Lonidier discussing the current relevance of the Soviet debates from the 1920s in terms of the photographic practices of the 1980s. That text connected the new photographic documentary practices, embodied by those two artists, with Soviet factography and the classic debates on realism, and examined the potential for resistance and opposition still inherent to art.[8]

Document, Persuasion, Propaganda

Before turning to what concerns us here – mainly, tracing the evolution of a certain dynamic conception introduced by El Lissitzky of the exhibition space on the basis of the use of photography – it is necessary to briefly

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7. See particularly the essay 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression. Notes on the Return of Representation in European Painting', in *October*, no. 16 (Spring 1981), pp 39–68.

8. 'Since Realism There Was… (On the Current Conditions of Factographic Art)', in the catalogue of the exhibition *Art and Ideology* (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984).

review some of the conditions of the photographic document as a technology of visual persuasion.

In his classic study of American documentary culture in the 1930s, William Stott describes social documentary as a genre geared towards persuasion and towards educating the public on what should change. As such, that genre aimed to produce social effects; it was propagandistic, even in a culture and era that rejected propaganda: 'Though the people of the time hated the idea of propaganda, propaganda was in fact their common mode of expression.'[9]

The premise for the persuasive or propagandistic nature of the social documentary is the ideology of photography as a universal language. This idea goes back to nineteenth-century pioneers of photographic criticism, like Oliver Wendell Holmes and Francis Wey, and extends to twentieth-century authors, from the reformist Lewis Hine working at the beginning of the century, to André Malraux and his post-war *musée imaginaire* constituted of photographic reproductions. It also includes Soviet and German critics working in the 1920s and 1930s. In a context dominated by the positivist philosophy that underlays the ideology of the modern capitalist (that is, liberal-industrial-colonial) State, photography promises a utopian means of universal communication, a sort of 'pre-linguistic language' unhindered by social and cultural differences (at least starting with the introduction of the positive-negative methods around 1850 and thus with the possibility of multiplication of prints). August Sander put it classically this way in 1931: 'Because it can be universally understood, photography is already first among picture languages for the masses of people in the world.'[10] Photography, then, seemed to take to the extreme the Western epistemological paradigm based on the centrality of vision, on the identification of knowledge and vision.

It is from this position that, in the late 1920s, Sergei Tretiakov, the primary theorist of Soviet factography, stated that 'Photography is not just a stenographer, it also explains'.[11] Indeed, he maintained that the photographic essay or series was singularly useful when it came to analysing and clarifying the complexity of the social, given that 'serial photography

9. William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p 25.

10. August Sander, 'Photography as Universal Language', in Jerome Liebling, ed., *Photography: Current Perspectives*, special issue of *The Massachusetts Review*, Light Impressions, Rochester (1978), p 48.

11. Sergei Tretiakov, 'From the Editor', in Christopher Phillips, ed., *Photography in the Modern Era. European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913–1940* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Aperture, 1989), p 271.

delivers a momentary cross-section that cuts through the entire skein of relationships that entangle the individual'.[12] At almost the same time, in the United States Lewis Mumford stated: 'Photography – and perhaps only that – is capable of speaking for itself and to present adequately the complicated aspects that are integrated in our modern world.'[13]

In this sense, then, visual ruptures and debates on factography and documentary that took place in the Soviet Union, Germany and the United States in around 1930 were not only the result of a redefinition or 'rebirth' of photography, of its new centrality to modern visual culture due to its mass-scale emergence on the public sphere in the 1920s (via the illustrated press). They were also indicative of a change in the relationships between the work of art and the audience, a redefinition of the traditional roles of each according to the demands and expectations for images among the new urban masses as well as to the new conditions offered by the mass media in terms of circulation of such images and constitution of a new visual regime.

In his classic essays on the work of art in the age of mass reproduction and on the author as producer, Walter Benjamin stated that 'the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character',[14] and that readers were becoming collaborators.[15] The primary agents of the emergence of a photographic public sphere in the 1920s were the illustrated press and the birth of the modern photo-reportage. At the end of that decade, though, a new paradigm of photographic exhibition, introduced by Lissitzky, became a medium for that public sphere. It is essential to understand how this new type of exhibition space staged an identification between image and audience, how the exhibitionary device itself was based on techniques and methods that implied a psychic collaboration between the work and the audience, a collaboration that exceeded their traditional roles.

Since the 1920s, photomontage constitutes a juxtaposition of disconnected elements whose meaning is produced through the viewer's act of recomposing and resignifying all the parts that make up the work,

12. Sergei Tretiakov, 'From the Photo-Series to Extended Photo-Observation', in *October*, no. 118 (Autumn 2006), p 77.

13. Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (1934). Spanish edition: *Técnica y civilización* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1971),

p 359. My translation from the Spanish edition.

14. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1973).

15. Walter Benjamin, 'The

Author as Producer' in Stanley Mitchell, ed., *Understanding Brecht* (London: New Left Books, 1973).

rendering them something other than a collection of fragments. The expanded photographic exhibition introduced by Lissitzky taked this collaboration between author and audience to an architectural or spatial dimension. Hence, this type of exhibition which, generally speaking, made use of enlargements and multiple points of view, did not only involve representing or giving shape to a new mass subject; it also entailed intervening in the psychic process of perception by providing a space and a mechanism for a public reading of images. The public ceased to be viewers and became operators. It is hard to convey the importance of this rupture at that time, given that since then advertising – which is born from this rupture – has naturalised the type of relationship with images that emerged at that moment.

Lastly, there is the question of the subject of documentary, the working-class or mass subject implicit to the debates in the 1930s on the document and to the emergence of the documentary genre as such. Once again, William Stott provides a key to understanding this. Speaking of John Grierson, classic founder of the documentary genre, Stott explained that the subject of the social documentary is 'the human condition', that is, common people, the man in the street. Evidently, though, the 1930s notion of 'the human' had a class bias: 'the "men" are of course the workers'. And that is why Stott states that 'documentary is a radically democratic genre',[16] that is, a genre constituted for the self-representation of the public. This identification with the public connects with the mechanisms of the expanded photographic exhibition mentioned above and the new photographic public sphere implicit to it. It is a symptom of the political conditions of the 1930s which lead to the classic dilemma formulated by Benjamin between the aesthetisation of politics and the politicisation of art, between Fascism and revolution.[17]

This dilemma of the 1930s entailed antagonistic ways of representing the working-class or popular subject during the decade. There were, for example, the practices of materialist emancipatory self-representation of the workers' photography movement promoted by the Communist International. These practices circulated through magazines like *AIZ* and *Der Arbeiter Fotograf*, which offered a counter-model to the paternalist Griersonian documentary, and to later reformist magazines like *Life* and

16. Stott, *Documentary Expression*, op. cit., p 49.

17. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', op. cit., p 57.

Picture Post. Another example of the dilemma can be find in the August Sander's study of social typologies that can be considered antagonistic to the Spanish José Ortiz-Echagüe's folkloric representations of the rural world as constituted by idealised ahistorical archetypes. There were many examples of this sort of reactionary representations in Europe. In the 1930s, there were many works that visibilised the real ideological tensions of the time and which embodied unresolved dilemmas, open options of the time. They would appear in completely different terms after the Second World War, when a new world order was built around the welfare State and the Cold War. In the 1930s, the image of the everyday man, the rhetoric of the human and of the man in the street was the embodiment of the potential for revolutionary transformation and its spectres.

Photography and the Space of Expanded Vision

The beginnings of the paradigm of expanded exhibition of propagandistic photography lie in the 1920s, in the Soviet debates on photography and on the processes for incorporating art into technical means of production and the mass media, as theorised in Boris Arvatov's 'productivist' programme.[18] This is the logic of the shift from painting to photography that is evident in artists like Alexander Rodchenko, or from art to architecture, in the case of Lissitzky. This shift is the final and logical consequence of the Soviet debates on superseding the autonomy of bourgeois art and the full inclusion of aesthetic activity into social practice and the economy of the industrial State. Both cases involve the incorporation of technical media and processes in the construction of the work. The artist abandons the liberal autonomous activity of modern art, and works for the production of propaganda for the new Communist State.

 In 1926, Lissitzky began what he himself considered the most important phase of his production: his work as an exhibition designer, which constituted a decisive moment in the evolution of his work.[19] From 1928 to 1930, he designed three fundamental photography exhibitions that established a new exhibition paradigm based on an immersive and dynamic conception of vision. The first was the Soviet pavilion at the International Press Exhibition (*Pressa*), in Cologne in 1928. One key ele-

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18. Boris Arvatov, *Arte y producción* (Madrid: Alberto Corazón, 1973). Originally: *Iskusstvo I proizvodstvo* (1926).
19. 'Autobiografía', in the catalogue *El Lissitzky Arquitecto, pintor, fotógrafo, tipógrafo, 1890–1941* (Madrid: Fundación Caja de Pensiones, 1990), p 8.

ment of that exhibition was a large-scale photomontage, or 'photofresco' that Lissitzky designed with Sergei Senkin and other artists, like Gustav Klutsis. The photofresco depicted the history and role of the publishing industry in the USSR after the Revolution, and its slogan was 'the work of the press is to educate the masses'. The work's large scale made reference to both mural painting and film, specifically to the documentary and informative films of Dziga Vertov. The photomontage was influenced by Cubism – in the simultaneous use of different points of view and the evidence of its own construction and materiality – and by the theories of cinematographic montage, in the juxtaposition and simultaneity of different times.

Lissitzky would also be responsible for designing the Soviet room in the influential International Film and Photo Exhibition of the Deutscher Werkbund, held in Stuttgart in 1929. This was the first major exhibition of avant-garde photography in the 1920s and it marked the incorporation of this medium into modernism. Many different countries participated, including the United States, with a selection chosen by Edward Weston and Edward Steichen; France, whose curator was Christian Zervos; Holland and Belgium, curated by Piet Zwart; Germany, with a selection chosen by László Moholy-Nagy and Gustaf Stotz, and the USSR, whose representatives were selected by Lissitzky himself.

The Soviet selection presented the work of some of the most well-known Russian photographers of the time (Rodchenko, Ignatovich, Shaikhet, Alpert, etc.), as well as other amateur and press photographers. The Soviet section also included film stills from avant-garde Soviet films, and some posters. None of the works included texts, as the exhibition attempted to have a purely visual impact. The images were placed within an architectural structure designed specifically by Lissitzky to display them.

In 1930, Lissitzky designed the Soviet pavilion at the International Hygiene Exhibition that was held in Dresden. Here, he took the principles that could be seen in the *Pressa* exhibition in Cologne to an extreme, designing a total visual space where even the ceiling was covered with posters.

Starting at the beginning of the 1930s, Lissitzky's exhibition paradigms had constituted, for both designers and advertisers, a new language for photography within the exhibition space. This was especially true at exhibitions whose mission was to represent States, particularly totalitarian States.

In 1930, Herbert Bayer designed the Deutscher Werkbund pavilion at the Society of Applied Arts Exhibition in Paris as well as the pavilion of the

Building Workers Exhibition in Berlin, in 1931. A graphic artist and photographer, Bayer was a pioneer in the field of modern advertising and in the notion of expanded vision, a theory of dynamic, non-linear vision which, for exhibition practices, meant establishing a relationship between the human visual field and the photographic space through photo-typographic panels at varying heights. The goal of such panels, which would later be imported to the United States, was to create an experience of full sensorial immersion. Bayer was familiar with the work of Lissitzky at the Paris and Berlin exhibitions (collaborative projects with Moholy-Nagy, Gropius and Breuer) and as a result, he began using photographic panels distributed dynamically along different planes and at different levels based on a 360° visual field. This represented a break from the traditional and rigid presentation of images at an even height, supposedly eye level. In addition, Bayer began to use ramps in order to multiply the points of view of the set of elements, offering a bird's eye view from which everything could be seen.

   In fact, it was Bayer who systematised, theorised and to a great extent promoted Lissitzky's innovations in Europe and later in the United States. He defined the new photographic exhibition paradigm in these terms: 'The innovation is in the use of a dynamic space design instead of unyielding symmetry, in the unconventional use of various materials, and in the application of a new scale, as in the use of giant photographs.'[20] Bayer believed that through such innovations, exhibitions became mass media, providing the technical and conceptual basis for the ideological use of advertising methods in National Socialist exhibitions that would proliferate starting in 1933. The first exhibition of this kind under the Nazi regime was *The Camera* (*Die Kamera*). Organized by the German Werkbund in November of that year, that exhibition was an attempt to further the project of the celebrated *Film und Foto* exhibition. *The Camera* exhibition's slogan was Goebbels's: 'Individual experience has become an experience of the people due to the camera.' The photography industry, professional and amateur photographer associations and related educational programmes were all key to this event.

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20. Herbert Bayer, 'Aspects of Design of Exhibitions and Museums' (1961), in Arthur A. Cohen, *Herbert Bayer. The Complete Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984), p 365.

Though it could not be considered an avant-garde exhibition, *The Camera*, whose catalogue was designed by Bayer, included a Hall of Honour dominated by an enormous photomural that took up the entire upper part of the perimeter. The photomural included a military column and was dedicated to the 'martyrs of the movement'. It also featured a series of large photo murals at the entrance that illustrated the history of the National Socialist movement. Unlike the Soviet murals, the images here respected the traditional principles of illusionist visual space and the central perspective. The avant-garde principles of the photomontage and of the total dynamic space were transformed when put to the service of Fascism, abandoning the principle of photomontage and adopting regressive forms of monumentality.

The influence of Lissitzky's designs could also be seen in the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution in Rome, 1932. Room 0 of the exhibition, designed by architect Giuseppe Terragni, included a monumental photomontage entitled 'See how the inflammatory words of Mussolini attract the people of Italy with the violent power of turbines and convert them to Fascism'. In this work, a crowd of heads was seen moving along large turbine wheels that rose diagonally, led by an enormous hand. The turbines and the hands – along with texts by Mussolini that made reference to the March on Rome in 1922 – symbolised the power of the masses. The mural clearly showed the influence of the Soviet photomontage of Gustav Klutsis and the photofresco of the *Pressa* exhibition.

In 1937, the International Exhibition of Arts and Techniques of the Modern Life was held in Paris. The Spanish Republic – then immersed in civil war – participated in this exhibition. Its pavilion was designed by Josep Lluís Sert and Luis Lacasa, and its careful use of resources conveyed the Republic's values of austerity and modernity. The exhibition included important works by Miró and Calder, and its central work was Picasso's *Guernica*. The Spanish pavilion presented the battle against Fascism and included photographic works that displayed the regional diversity of the country. Designed by Josep Renau, the photographic murals in this pavilion reflected the particular Spanish interpretation of the thesis on the exhibition as a mass medium and the notion of using art in the ideological struggle, an idea widely accepted by the Popular Front international left in the 1930s.

Well known for his political signs and photomontages inspired on Heartfield and published in magazines such as *Octubre* and *Nueva Cultura*, Renau had been appointed general director of the Fine Arts

Policies. His murals, inspired by the Soviet and German models, used photographs from different archives – mostly from the Misiones Pedagógicas, though these were neither strictly photographic nor too distant from the traditional notion of a unified pictorial space. Therefore, they diverged from the dialectical pattern of Soviet photomontage and were somewhat closer to the principles of Socialist Realism. In both his images of the Misiones and his murals, Renau attempted to construct an image of the working classes anchored in the rural world and its traditional production. Both constructed a unique representation of the emerging historical subject that embodied the progressive aspirations of the Popular Front ideology of the Spanish Republic.

However, in this pavilion, the dialectic of the representation of the popular mass subject in the 1930s was manifest in an ambivalent way. Along with the murals – which included images of rural public produced by the Misiones Pedagógicas (images that can be linked to the forms of self-representation of the public in certain movies by Vertov, such as *Man with a Movie Camera*, and thus, with a discourse characteristic of the Soviet debates) – Ortiz-Echagüe's photographs of Spanish rural 'types' were also presented. These photographs constituted an idealised, over-aestheticised and ahistorical version of traditional, rural Spain, and represent a fundamental contribution to the aesthetics of Spanish National Catholicism, to Spanish Fascism, who would later adopt Ortiz-Echagüe as its major photographer.

In 1938, Herbert Bayer emigrated to the United States and began collaborating on the design of exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1942, in the midst of the Second World War, he designed the exhibition *Road to Victory*, comprised of war photographs and curated by Edward Steichen, director of MoMA's photography department at the time. *Road to Victory* was the first in a series of propagandistic exhibitions organised by MoMA at the request of the US government. These exhibitions were based on the principles of expanded vision and the use of photography as a mass medium, as theorised by Bayer. Once again, we find ourselves before images by multiple authors, images that reflected a variety of formats and devices that, with a cinematic echo, entailed dynamic vision. Like the exhibition's texts, the photographs were hung at different heights and angles, according to a very specific notion of sequence. Together, they generated a sensorial effect similar to that of a great photomontage. These principles would reappear in MoMA's next photography exhibition on the War, *Power in the Pacific*, in 1945.

Also curated by Steichen, it made use of the same exhibition techniques and rhetoric.[21]

After the Second World War

The concept of the photograph as an element to unify diverse objects and materials – and as a medium for universal communication – was, after the Second World War, widespread. In *Les Voix du silence*, published in 1951, André Malraux affirmed that 'La photographie en noir "rapproche" les objets q'elle représente, pour peu qu'ils soient apparentés'.[22] The role of illustrated magazines is fundamental to this thinking.

The reformist documentary rhetoric reached its maximum expression in the illustrated magazines that were popular throughout the mid-1930s, magazines which constitute the peak expression of photography's hegemony in the mass media which would last until the 1950s, before the arrival of television. Magazines such as *Life, Look, Picture Post* and *Paris Match*, amongst many others, spearheaded this period internationally, offering powerful representations of everyday life and its problems and difficulties, and presenting the values of humanism – such as sacrifice and good will – as tools for addressing these issues. The language of these magazines revealed true concern for social problems but from a reformist point of view: 'there is a rhetoric of change and improvement there, of people capable of resilience and courage; but there isn't anywhere a language of dissent, opposition or revolt.'[23] *Life* magazine proved most influential during this period; it had a major, long-lasting impact on the very conception of the photographic document in the West.

The avant-garde British artists, architects and critics in the Independent Group (the predecessors of Pop Art) held a series of exhibitions during the 1950s in which the principles of the expanded avant-garde were reinterpreted. One of the most outstanding of these exhibitions was *Parallel of Life and Art*, presented at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), London, in 1953. The exhibition was based on Malraux's notions of the

21. Christopher Phillips has studied the career of Steichen, particularly in relation to MoMA's art policies, in his book *Steichen at War* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1981), and in the essays 'Steichen's *Road to Victory*', in *Exposure*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1980) [see pp 367–78 of this volume] and the aforementioned 'The Judgment Seat of Photography', op. cit.

22. André Malraux, 'Les Voix du silence', in Malraux, *Écrits sur l'art I (Œuvres complètes, IV)* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2004), p 212.

23. Stuart Hall, 'The Social Eye of Picture Post', in Jo Spence, Terry Dennett, David Evans and Sylvia Gohl, eds., *Photography/Politics One* (London: The Photography Workshop, 1979), p 27.

musée imaginaire – an encyclopaedic archive of the art or all times and cultures made up of photographic reproductions – and on the type of photography found in *Life* magazine. It was based on a anthropological understanding of history, that linked the world of material culture and the artistic experience. Organised by Eduardo Paolozzi, Nigel Henderson, Alison and Peter Smithson and Ronald Jenkins, the exhibition consisted exclusively of black and white photographic panels of different sizes hung from string at different heights and at different angles, from the floor up to the ceiling. The images came from a plethora of sources, from press images to X-rays, bird's eye views, archaeological documents, etc. In general, none of these images was artistic. The encyclopaedic juxtaposition of images created an archaeology of the present, an updated notion of the cabinet of curiosities that predated the modern museum. It was presented as a grammar of the material universe of the times, a visual atlas of a new landscape unveiled by new sciences. Photography was what allowed this diversity to be unified and articulated.

Although this was not a propagandistic exhibition as such, the fact that it can be included in this account evidences the widespread popularity of the photographic principles based on the experiences of the 1930s and how these principles came to be a sort of photographic unconscious after the Second World War. After the war, the artistic avant-garde and the political avant-garde were not articulated according to the same conditions of the pre-war period. Indeed, this articulation was systematically absent. With a few exceptions, like Neo-realism in Italy, it would be necessary to wait until the 1960s and 1970s to again encounter the type of connections that occurred in the paradigms of the 1920s. In the 1950s, the political antagonisms that determined aesthetics options in the 1930s had grown elusive and the artistic avant-garde had become institutionalised. The Western avant-garde in the Cold War is a State avant-garde, not related to any particular social movement and produced in a context in which propaganda had lost legitimacy. The post-war period favoured discourses that diluted social tensions and antagonisms, such as the discourse of humanism that would dominate the Western scene and its new geopolitical order.

In the post-war context, the forms of representation had changed for the working-class subject – the subject par excellence of the major propagandistic photo exhibitions, as mentioned before. This shift could be seen clearly in the new humanist rhetoric. The intellectual path taken by Malraux – and his distancing from the Communist Party – was an

example of this transformation. It evidenced the way the avant-garde principles that had resulted from the Soviet influence in the 1930s had changed and, later, were abandoned by the leading figures on the Western art scene. Malraux's study of the migration of artistic forms that moved between diverse cultures, a notion of migration rooted in the late 1920s Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project, that to led to his *musée imaginaire*, revealed the intellectual layers of the principles of formalism and provided humanism with an anthropological anchor.

Parallel of Life and Art is significant to this shift in the artistic avant-garde of the 1950s and indicative of how artistic innovators lost their connection to the mass political movements of the West. That show also evidenced how artists formed new relations with the hegemonic art institutions that proliferated after the war while the welfare State blossomed.

MoMA's major 1955 exhibition, *The Family of Man*, was the culmination of the principles of the exhibition based on expanded vision. It also represented the final instance of a certain cultural hegemony and its implicit notions of persuasion and universality. As such, the exhibition constituted an inflection in the use of this type of exhibition as a mass medium and as mass ideological propaganda. *The Family of Man* was also the peak expression of humanist discourse and of the new role of art and high culture in the cultural Cold War, within the geopolitical framework of major international institutions like the United Nations and Unesco. A paradigm of humanist photography during the post-war period in the West, this exhibition provided a sweeping representation of the working classes that arose after the war, and of the pact between capital and the workforce that led to the creation of the welfare State in the West.[24]

MoMA played a fundamental role in making this new order legitimate. This occurred in two stages: in the first, MoMA worked in accordance with Unesco policies (mainly under Steichen's administration, this phase ended with the exhibition *The Family of Man*). During the second stage – which began in the 1960s under John Szarkowski – major modern authors were canonised and a formalist aesthetic was articulated. Straight photography and the 'documentary style' of Walker Evans were the basic

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24. On the resignification of the working classes in humanist photography, particularly in France, see the essay by Peter Hamilton: 'Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Post-War Humanist Photography', in Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE Publications – Open University, 1997).

grammar for this aesthetic and, as such, social considerations were eliminated from the documentary genre.

The Family of Man was organised as a linear epic journey through the vital experiences of the man in the street people, of the working classes. These classes were understood as a universal human condition, according to the post-war humanism. The exhibition began with images of romance, birth and maternity, and ended with images of the UN parliament; in the middle, there were images of labour, science, recreation, etc. Post-war humanism is based on an essentialist anthropological conception of social life and history, on the idea that a sort of generic and universal human condition lies beyond differences of culture, gender, class and race. On the basis of this conception, solidarity and compassion can flourish. This idea rests on the ideological precepts of Western Christianity and of the family as the supreme instance of those precepts. To a great extent, the powerful effect of the exhibition was due to the secular use of religious rhetoric. The exhibition included the work of a great number of photographers, many of whom published their work in *Life* magazine, and it reflected the magazine's sentimental, integrating and compassionate rhetoric. Like *Life*, it joined a certain poetic, transcendentalist texts and powerful black–and–white images.

In his memoirs published in 1963, Steichen summarised the principles used in the exhibition's photomontage and his understanding of the public in a way that brings to mind Herbert Bayer's thesis: 'The contrast in scale of images, the shifting of focal points, the intriguing perspective of long- and short-range visibility with the images to come being glimpsed beyond the images at hand – all these permit the spectator an active participation that no other form of visual communication can give.'[25]

The Family of Man exhibition embodied notions of community and transnational citizenship before the working classes had been turned into mass consumers. Photography was presented as a *lingua franca* and, as Blake Stimson has explained, it pointed to the moment when the *homo politicus* (who appeared during the Russian revolution of 1917) became *homo economicus*. This new subject was born through the mass access to consumption that began in the 1960s: 'For a brief moment in the middle

25. Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p 227 [see pp 457–68 of this volume]. For a political reading of *The Family of Man*, see the Allan Sekula essay, 'Traffic in Photographs', op. cit.

there was another promise of global subjectivity that did not imagine itself either on the model of the citizen or on the model of the consumer but instead as a global *homo culturalis*…. This separation of culture from politics and economics was a kind of delusion, of course, but on the other it was also pretty close to the old dream of enlightenment, a dream that by definition requires an arena of meaning making separate from the instrumental reasoning of commerce and governance in order to realise its aim.'[26]

The Family of Man thus represented the end of the historical moment in which photography was key to visual paradigms and techniques in propagandistic exhibitions, a moment that began in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Those Soviet paradigms and techniques spread throughout Europe in the 1930s, reached the United States and were adopted by the new hegemonic centre of world capitalism during the Second World War. In the following decade, the dominant forms of ideological persuasion would move from photography to television, adopting new rhetoric and new methods in the process.

26. Interview with Blake Stimson, 'The Photography of the Social Forms' (2007), at www.macba.cat.